

UNITED PRESS INTERNATIONAL
17 December 1983

WASHINGTON
BY HELEN THOMAS

Backstairs at the White House:

A White House directive that goes into effect in April requires government officials who handle highly classified materials to agree to pre-publication review of anything they write after they retire or quit.

The agreement, which must be signed, is a condition of employment.

But the catch is that President Reagan, who is privy to the most sensitive secrets of the nation, is not only free to write what he chooses, but to declassify any materials he may want for his memoirs.

The vice president and members of Congress also have a free hand in dealing with secret papers, according to the White House counsel's office, because "they are elected government officials and do not hold office by contract of employment."

"Therefore this regulation does not apply to them," said one of the White House lawyers.

Some White House aides do not like the idea of signing such an agreement and say they may not do it.

Pending a review Congress put a hold until April on the order, which was conceived by former national security affairs adviser William Clark.

Former presidents have made a mint from their writings and lectures after they have left the White House. The same is true of government officials, particularly former national security affairs adviser Henry Kissinger and Zbigniew Brzezinski.

The world has survived their disclosures and "I was there" revelations and historians have at least had their versions.

The new muzzle order will put constraints on some future authors if it goes unchallenged.

Under it, neither Kissinger nor Brzezinski, or Cabinet officials could write a line.

Such an order has been in effect at the Central Intelligence Agency for some years.

The National Archives contains thousands of documents with classified labels, and they will remain that way for a long time.

Revelations that FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover spied on several presidents is interesting to note and was learned because a historian applied for the documents under the Freedom of Information Act.